



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: July 28, 2003
Release Number: 03-52

Contact: Roger Hopkins, 202-205-6567
Internet Address: <http://www.sba.gov/opc>

Regulatory Agencies Earn Improving Grades from SBA

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Federal regulatory agencies are doing better at creating and maintaining a small-business friendly attitude toward the nation's small businesses, according to the fiscal 2002 annual report to Congress from the U.S. Small Business Administration's National Ombudsman.

More than 30 agencies and their divisions received ratings from National Ombudsman Michael Barrera on their resolution of complaints about excessive enforcement. The report, released today, is available online at www.sba.gov/ombudsman/dsp_reports.html.

"The ratings and the report are indicators of the government's relationship with the small business community," said SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto. "Some regulations are necessary, but when enforcement is excessive or unfair, time and money is diverted from employee training, customer service, facility improvements, or healthcare benefits. As a result of the Congressional authority granted the ombudsman's office and the direction provided by President Bush's agenda for small business, the creative energy of the nation's entrepreneurs is where it belongs – helping the economy expand and grow by putting more Americans to work."

As required by the 1996 Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act, Barrera's office reports annually to Congress on federal regulatory enforcement activities. Agencies are evaluated on how quickly they respond and resolve concerns from small businesses and the quality of those responses; representation by the agencies at regulatory fairness hearings held around the country; regulatory compliance assistance provided by agencies; and adoption and enforcement of non-retaliation policies by the agencies.

Barrera said the report provides valuable feedback to federal agencies on the federal regulatory enforcement environment for small business. "It is our hope that federal agencies will use the report as a tool to improve compliance assistance and move further from a 'gotcha' to a 'help you' attitude. This report also provides some of the best practices by federal agencies in their efforts to improve the overall enforcement environment," he said.

For more information about the office, where hearings will be conducted, or to file a comment or concern, go to www.sba.gov/ombudsman, or call 1-888-REG-FAIR.

*For more information about SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U ASK SBA or TDD 704-344-6640 or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov. The SBA, in co-sponsorship with Staples, has introduced an online newsletter, **SBA Solutions**. For a free subscription, go to <http://web.sba.gov/list> and select New **SBA Solutions Newsletter**.*

###